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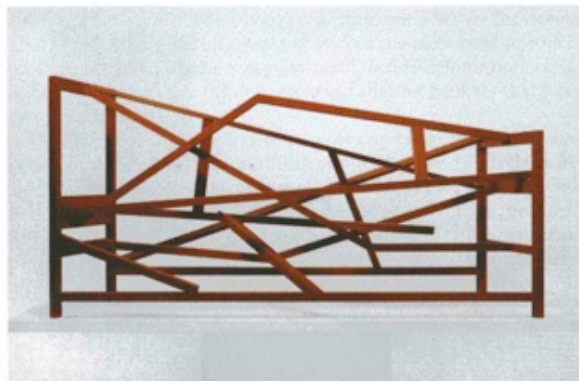
## REVIEWS

## Willard Boepple

LORI BOOKSTEIN FINE ART

At Lori Bookstein, Willard Boepple exhibited six recent sculptures, five of them of a type he calls "Looms." The basic structural idea, as always in his art, is deceptively simple: Within what the press release described as a "box-like frame" linear elements of various lengths run from side to side (also, less emphatically but nevertheless tellingly, between front and back), either horizontally or slanting; some extend slightly beyond the "frame." Boepple characteristically works in wood, and indeed two of the most beautiful pieces, *Burnley* and *Preston*, both 2008, are in poplar, the first painted a warm brick red, the second a pale yellow. The other four sculptures have been made in aluminum, and two have been painted as well (*Hawick*, 2008, in dark red, *Blackburn*, 2007, in dark earth green). *Irish Corners #2*, 2008 (the most David Smith-like of the group, and the only one not from the "Looms" series), and *Bradford*, 2008, have been left unpainted. The dimensions of the works are modest (none is more than five and a half feet wide, two and a half feet high, or two feet deep), but this proves more than sufficient for the relations among the linear elements and the legs, which are connected by horizontal crossbars along the left and right ends, to develop freely and richly, without the least sense of constraint. The overall effect is distinctly "musical," even "fugal": One's impression standing before and indeed moving around each sculpture, with its transparency and openness, is of separate voices, separate melodic lines, some evenly sustained, others rising or falling (or both), interacting with one another in an abstract equivalent to an acoustic "space."

What this means varies from piece to piece. In *Blackburn*, for example, the primary elements are horizontal and planar; the effect is of something less than full polyphony, on the order of a Gregorian chant, a relative simplicity that here translates into great formal strength. The more complex *Burnley*—the two ends of which are



Willard Boepple,  
*Burnley*, 2008,  
poplar, acrylic,  
29 x 60 x 21".

turned so that the work's "footprint" would be not rectangular but trapezoidal (this is also true of *Hawick* and *Preston*)—is dominated by angled elements, one of which, the leading "voice" in the piece, rises somewhat steeply from left to right, then abruptly changes direction not quite halfway across and descends more gently until it makes contact with the uppermost cross-element on the right. Inasmuch as most of the other elements move downward from left to right, the overall feeling is of the leading one submitting to the downward bias of the whole. But then the viewer discovers an element lower down rising, gently but insistently, all the way across; the longer he or she looks, the more decisive for the overall meaning of the work this comes to seem. That it is joined toward the right by a strut to the leading "voice" only confirms the viewer's sense of their ultimate accord.

For a long time now, Boepple has been making work of tremendous distinction, and it may be that with this show the measure of his achievement will become more widely evident. Syntactically, his vision owes something to two titanic figures, Smith and Caro, but so what? His "Temples" from 2003 and 2004 and now his "Looms" have achieved the most impressive individuality. If I have a favorite among the works shown, it is perhaps *Preston*, the most openly lyrical of the group, but all the pieces are strong, and the group as a whole is a knockout.

—Michael Fried

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